

Going Against The Grain

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Solomon warns against eating “dainties” served in Kings’ courts. “Put a knife to thy throat ... for they are deceitful meat” (Proverbs 23:23). Fast food eateries abound with deceitfully delicious burgers. Supermarkets sell processed foods, even frozen dinners, laced with appetite stimulants -- e.g., High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS). We also must beware of modern “Industrialized Wheat,” developed primarily as a profitable ingredient in a competitive array of deceptive “ Frankenfoods.” In his book, *Wheat Belly* [Rodale, New York (2011)], William Davis, M.D. sounds an alarm against engineered, hybridized wheat. Dr. Davis challenges obese, pre-diabetic Americans, “*Lose the wheat, lose the weight, and find your path back to health.*” *Wheat Belly* is very readable, punctuated throughout with folksy wit.

Davis chronicles the rise of wheat in man’s diet from cultivation of primitive wheat in the Fertile Crescent, circa 8,500 B.C. This *einkorn wheat* became common wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) through natural cross pollination with wild grasses. We now have a main staple, with flour well-adapted to baking.

Genetic experimentation, begun in the 1940s at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center in Mexico, came up with high-yield dwarf wheat that powered the “Green Revolution” and foiled doomsayers’ forecasts of worldwide famine in 1975.* Sadly, modern “miracle wheat” was not vetted for human safety, to the grief of those suffering from obesity, diabetes, heart attacks, arthritis, acne, osteoporosis, celiac disease, etc.

So, just how does the genetic baggage of modern wheat negatively impact major health problems in America? Davis first fingers the complex carbohydrates of wheat. Wheat’s highly digestible *amylopectin A* rapidly converts to glucose, spiking blood sugar level in a 120 minute yo-yo as insulin kicks in to curb elevated blood sugar.

Davis recounts that a 1981 Toronto study found the glycemic index (GI) of whole grain bread was 72 compared to the 41 GI recorded for a Snicker’s candy bar, “*far better than whole grain bread*” (p - 34). The wheat eater is strapped into a “two-hour roller coaster ride of satiety and hunger that repeats itself throughout the day ... The higher the glucose level [after snacking], the greater the insulin level, the more fat is deposited” (p-35). *Voila, a wheat belly!*

Dr. Davis is not just concerned about insulin-resistant obesity (pre-diabetes), diabetes and heart ailments associated with wheat-induced gyrations of blood sugar. He also rehearses the adverse impact of wheat gluten and other assorted proteins on those genetically prone to deadly celiac disease. He talks about the addictive properties of wheat, complete with withdrawal symptoms. He further reviews studies that link wheat consumption with schizophrenia and autism. Given the health risks of wheat, he anticipates a future scenario in which a label would be required for wheat: “*Surgeon General’s Warning: Wheat consumption in all forms poses potentially serious threats to health*” (p - 89).

Those who take the good doctor’s challenge to “lose the wheat” are indeed *going against the grain*. Davis includes some practical recipes for “wheataholics” determined to kick the habit. There is a recipe for great pancakes using almond flour in place of wheat. A tasty Avocado-Tuna salad recipe is included. Ground flax seed may be cooked and served as a hot cereal with unsweetened almond milk. There is even an intriguing recipe for “Wheat-free Pizza!”

Readers not prone to celiac disease may include non-wheat grains in their diet: oats, amaranth, millet, sorghum, etc. But they are advised to delay doing so. “These grains are best used after the wheat withdrawal process is over, once metabolic goals and weight loss have been achieved” (p - 212). Finally, Dr. Davis advises use of stevia and xylitol sweeteners, with low GI. Unhappily, he has not been briefed on the hazards of splenda which are posted at the Truth About Splenda.com.** Readers without symptoms of wheat intolerance are nevertheless well-advised to become informed about health problems posed by modern wheat, which has been market-injected into our food supply.

* See Paddocks’ Famine 1975, (1967).

** <http://www.truthaboutsplenda.com/>